

Paging doctors

Paging Doctors: Messages from a Medical Journalist. David Woods. 179 pp. Epigram Publishing, Ottawa, 1984. \$20. ISBN 0-9691765-0-3

Regardless of their chief interests among its various sections, most of the readers of the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* seldom fail to peruse the brief essay by David Woods, CMA's director of publications, that prefaces each issue. Here they are sure to find a clearly reasoned and plainly expressed exposition of an issue that is immediately relevant to the conduct of physicians' affairs or to cultural implications of professional attitudes. These articles, in other words, are directly related to the primary function of the essay, "to come home to Mens Businessse, and Bosomes". True, their style cannot be described as Baconian, but their matter is provocative and stimulating in the classic tradition of their literary form. The number of wide-ranging subjects that receive shrewd comment is impressive.

One can expect that there will be frequent occasions when readers will wish to refer again to the thoughts expressed, to recall the arguments adduced or to enjoy the grace of the writing itself. Therefore, it was a happy idea to publish a collection of these pieces as a book. Some of them will become outdated, but most deserve rereading and preservation in an easily accessible form. They constitute an attractive volume.

It is fitting that the opening article should deal with the proper use of language, for this is one of the author's main preoccupations. It is a recurrent theme throughout the book. Vogue words, clichés, solecisms, and turgid or unclear expressions are all anathema to the author. One must admire the zeal and energy he brings to chiding those who carelessly erode the precision of the English tongue. David Woods' own

style is at once urbane and of the utmost clarity, illuminated by flashes of humour and enlivened by the barbs he is not averse to casting at his audience. Its virtues are those advocated and practised by George Orwell, whose disciple the author proclaims himself. Nevertheless, features of his prose are the picturesque expressions and the occasional slips into journalese that he employs with good effect.

Included with the pieces written as introductions for *CMAJ* are transcripts of interviews with well known editors; these add variety to the text. There are also some longer articles that have been published in a number of other periodicals. Here, Woods casts his net beyond the medical field and displays his humorous touch. In describing himself as a medical journalist he is being too modest. Any assumption, on the basis of the book's title, that David Woods is mainly an apologist for the medical profession is dispelled by a careful reading.

This is no bedside book, for it is not designed to induce somnolence. But it should be kept close at hand for occasions when stimulating ideas are welcome.

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Emergency pediatrics

Manual of Emergency Pediatrics. 3rd ed. Edited by Robert M. Reece. 788 pp. Illust. W.B. Saunders, Toronto, 1984. \$39.95. ISBN 0-7216-7499-2

Both my pediatric training and my experience as an emergency room pediatrician have shown me that there are three relatively common pediatric infections that need aggressive and immediate management. These include epiglottitis, meningitis, and periorbital and or-

bital cellulitis. The third condition is not mentioned in this manual. However, there is a beautiful 41-page, tabulated description of parasitic diseases. Also included are photographs of various ova and parasites that are not seen in the "Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics".

However, some conditions that are not well covered include vertigo, chronic cough, disorders of calcium metabolism, abdominal wall defects and so on. Instead of 8 pages on neck masses and 14 pages on sexually transmitted disease I would rather have seen an elaborate and nicely written chapter on lacerations, which are often encountered in any acute care facility. There also should have been more details on orthopedic trauma, which constitutes more than 15% of emergency visits and is usually handled by nonspecialty staff.

The manual is divided into three parts: true emergencies, presenting complaints and diagnostic entities. The last is a miscellaneous collection of conditions ranging from superficially discussed eye, ear, nose and throat disorders to complex endocrine and metabolic disorders. This format has led to a tremendous amount of repetition.

There are, however, well written chapters on head trauma, child abuse and neglect, coma and stupor, sepsis, and genitourinary and gynecologic disorders. The chapter on poisoning is appropriate and is updated with references. There are eight appendices on laboratory values, immunization, antibiotics and instructions to parents that also provide useful information on head injuries, fever, diarrhea and poisoning.

There are several aspects of the book that are irritating. For example, traditional, rather than SI, units are given for various laboratory values, so one has to use conversion factors and reference tables to change the values. The reference for rabies (page 389) is wrong. The photographs in the chapter on supraglottitis and croup are poorly reproduced. Isotherine (Bronkosol),